

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

CURRENT

SUBJECT: LAND GUIDANCE
POLICY NO.: 600-39
EFFECTIVE DATE: August 4, 1992

BACKGROUND:

Land Guidance was established as a section of the Mobility Program with its adoption by the City Council on September 11, 1989. The three major components of the Mobility Program are: Transit Management to improve the public transportation system; Transportation Systems Management to increase capacity and ease congestion through operational improvements to the street and highway system; and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) to reduce transportation demand through modified travel behavior and land development policies that reduce automobile dependence. Land Guidance is a part of the TDM program.

PURPOSE:

To strategically apply the “Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines,” (incorporated into this policy by reference and available in the City Clerk’s Office as Document Number RR-280480), throughout the City in order to create a desirable and more efficient urban form. The goal is to direct growth into compact neighborhood patterns of development, where living and working environments are within walkable distances. This development pattern is designed to support the substantial public investment in transit systems, and result in regional environmental and fiscal benefits over the long term. Transit or pedestrian-oriented development can take place in new development areas on vacant land as well as in existing communities, provided that community context, infrastructure and public facilities needs are addressed. The design guidelines are based on the following principles:

- * Reduce auto trips to work, shopping and recreation by creating and enhancing opportunities to walk, bike and use transit.
- * Reduce the need for roadway expansions when transportation demand can be met through other modes.
- * Reduce air pollutant emissions, conserve energy resources and reduce automobile traffic congestion.
- * Maximize the potential to preserve open spaces by focusing resources and development in the most developable areas of the city, preserving environmentally sensitive lands for future generations.
- * Provide a diversity of housing types, at various affordability levels and densities through efficient use of land and infrastructure, and by taking advantage of citywide incentives programs.
- * Maximize opportunities for living, working and convenience activities within the same neighborhood.

- * Foster a more vital, interactive and secure community where living and working opportunities exist for a diverse population.
- * In areas where transit routes are already established, maximize opportunities for infill development and redevelopment that also provides for community infrastructure and public facilities needs.
- * In the planning of new transit routes, encourage alignments that could promote the revitalization of existing communities, especially those with a potential for higher density development.
- * Coordinate land use planning efforts to reinforce transit by designating densities and land use mixes that will support potential transit patronage, and reinforce pedestrian and bicycle travel by designing multiple and direct street connections within neighborhoods.

A “Transit-Oriented Development” (TOD) is a pattern of use with a concentrations of moderate and higher density housing, along with public parks and plazas, job resources and commercial services in mixed-use developments located at strategic points on the existing and planned transit system. Lower density housing, including single-family residences, and other more auto-dependent uses may be included in “secondary areas” outside of the TOD. In some established neighborhoods, existing homes and businesses already comprise the backbone of TOD and secondary areas, and with limited new land uses and street connections, can create a wholly functioning TOD.

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the City to pursue an urban form that includes a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use multimodal transportation environment. More specifically, the City shall strategically apply the “Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines” by incorporation of the guidelines into: Progress Guide and General Plan policies; community plan policies; demonstration projects; discretionary project permits; municipal code standards and enabling ordinances; street design guidelines; and facilities financing policies. Implementation of the guidelines will result in changes to existing neighborhoods. To ensure that this change has a positive impact, the City shall demonstrate a high level of public participation and monitoring at every level of the planning and development process.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Implementation of the Land Guidance program is intended to occur by incorporating the TOD guidelines into City policies and regulations. If this strategy is successful, ultimately the need for a distinct TOD Guidelines document will be gone. Until that time is reached, there is a need to ensure appropriate application and interpretation of the guidelines by the City and applicants. The implementation steps outlined below provide guidance on how to reasonably integrate the TOD Guidelines into City documents while maximizing the opportunity to apply them during a transition period.

1. Progress Guide and General Plan

High priority transit-oriented development opportunity areas should be mapped and identified in the Progress Guide and General Plan and where necessary, the appropriate community plan. High priority areas should be located within a 2000-foot radius (about ten minutes walking distance) of an existing or planned light rail or high speed limited stop bus station as depicted on Council-approved transit maps, that are already identified as growth areas/urban nodes/employment centers in the Progress Guide and General Plan and/or community plans. Identification of these TOD opportunity areas, should occur in coordination with community planning groups, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the Regional Growth Management Strategy process. Concurrent with the designation of TOD opportunity areas, an ordinance should be developed to require application of the TOD Guidelines on the identified sites.

In the course of any update to the General Plan Land Use and Transportation elements, amendments should emphasize non-automobile travel opportunities, identify additional areas where transit-oriented development is desirable, and reconcile potential conflicts amount sensitive resource protection, community character preservation and transportation corridor expansion goals.

2. Community Plans

Through the community plan update process the City should take a proactive approach to designating transit corridors and planning for mixed-use and transit-supportive land uses, and incorporating the TOD urban design guidelines into community plans. When designating corridors, the degree to which potential transit routes can be anticipated to serve mixed-use or multifamily residential development should be a major factor in determining new alignments. To plan for mixed-use and transit-supportive land uses, transit-oriented development opportunity areas should be identified, and specific land use densities, intensities and mixes should be designated. However, there should be no increase in community plan designated densities without the provision of adequate public facilities and neighborhood amenities.

In addition, nonmotorized transportation corridors such as bicycle routes and pedestrian passages should be identified through the plan update process. Community planning groups, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board, employers, and other interested members of the public must have key roles in this effort.

3. Street Design Guidelines

The Street Design Manual should be updated to introduce greater flexibility into the guidelines to allow, in appropriate locations, development in accordance with TOD principles that promote a network of: interconnected streets; non-motorized access passages; variable street widths and configurations for local streets; increased sidewalk widths; business and residential-serving alleys; and widespread use of street trees within mixed-use, transit-oriented areas while still providing adequate sight distance. Other pedestrian and transit supportive design features should also be considered as needed.

4. Demonstration Projects

The City desires to see the development of transit-oriented developments in the near future, but recognizes that many City standards, guidelines and zones, including provisions of the Street Design Manual, are not presently consistent with TOD guidelines. In order to allow TOD demonstration projects to proceed in advance of the time it will take to revise City regulations, the City should permit variations from existing standards as warranted. When variations are granted, there must also be permit conditions designed to minimize City liability and to monitor the effectiveness of the innovative design features.

Project monitoring is an important element of a demonstration project. The City should use data gathered through project monitoring to assess whether the project is functioning adequately and to determine if future projects should contain similar features. Master planned development permits and redevelopment area plans should be used as appropriate to implement TOD demonstration projects.

5. Discretionary Project Review

Through the normal course of discretionary project review, the City should encourage proposed projects fully or partially located within 2000 feet of an existing or planned Light Rail Transit, commuter rail, express bus or transit corridor stop as identified on Council-approved transit alignment maps to incorporate elements of the Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines into project design. It should be recognized that not all of the guidelines are appropriate to every project. The overall goal to create opportunities for efficient and pleasant pedestrian, bicycle and transit circulation is more important than fastidious application of every guideline.

If existing community plans have not yet been updated with regard to the TOD guidelines, and a property owner desires to construct a project that meets the site selection, development and public facilities criteria of the TOD guidelines, the City should offer an expedited plan amendment and discretionary permit process, while still ensuring opportunities for full community input.

6. Municipal Code Standards

Some of the design guidelines are suitable for application in projects that are not formally recognized as TODs, but are still striving for a greater pedestrian orientation and a reduction in automobile dependence. Those guidelines that could have citywide application should be used as a basis to amend or delete existing zones and create new zones. In addition, some of the design guidelines in designated TOD areas could be included in zoning regulations and implemented through a ministerial process. These Municipal code amendments should be accomplished as a part of the Zoning Code Update project.

7. Public Facilities

Public facilities and services such as schools, libraries, parks and recreation centers should be located in transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhoods whenever possible to provide a transit travel option for patrons and to strengthen the sense of community. Small parks and plazas,

designed to accommodate the anticipated intensity of use, should be put in place with greater frequency as a means to meet General Plan standards and neighborhood park needs.

The TOD Guidelines pertaining to infrastructure, public facilities and neighborhood amenities should be addressed by all TOD projects. These elements are key to the success of the Land Guidance program's goal to create high quality, liveable, compact neighborhoods.

8. Private Sector Incentives

The City should encourage private investment in TOD projects by supporting a package of incentives that could address permit processing, environmental review, and fee deferrals or reductions.

The permit processing incentives should include: exemption from the community plan amendment batching process; concurrent community plan amendment, environmental review, rezone and discretionary permit processing; and access to housing affordability incentives programs.

To simplify the environmental review process for TOD projects, the City should prepare a comprehensive environmental analysis in order to address regional issues, such as traffic levels of service and air quality, at a macro level which would take into account regional benefits and feasible mitigation measures. In addition, vehicle trip generation rates reduced by walking, bicycling and transit should be considered for projects identified as TODs in the General Plan. Future environmental review of individual TOD projects would be expedited by being able to focus on site specific issues.

Incremental development of large, master planned TOD projects should be supported by the City through phased infrastructure requirements and a substantial conformance findings (or similar) process. Substantial conformance findings would be appropriate when a portion of a master-planned TOD project is submitted that is in conformance with an approved planed development permit and environmental document.

In recognition of the cumulative fiscal benefit resulting from a more efficient urban form, fees for projects developed as TODs in General Plan identified TOD opportunity areas should be reduced. The reduction must be linked to a demonstrated reduction in need for facilities to serve the TOD development, or the City's ability or willingness to supplement public facility development costs through the use of other City, regional, State and federal financing sources.

PHASING:

The eight steps outlined in this policy represent a comprehensive strategy for implementation of Land Guidance principles.

Initial steps to implement the program should include:

- * approval of the "Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines,"
- * approval of private sector incentives,
- * processing and approval of demonstration projects,

- * amendments to the Street Design Manual and Council Policy 600-04, and
- * amendments to Council Policy 600-35 for community plan amendment batching procedures.

Mid-term implementation actions should include:

- * focused Progress Guide and General Plan amendments coordinated with the Regional Growth Management Strategy process, the Air Pollution Control District, the Metropolitan Transit Development Board, and CALTRANS, and
- * Zoning Code amendments.

Long-term/ongoing actions include:

- * community plan updates, and
- * discretionary project review.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-280480 08/04/1992